

Thursday 12 January 2023

St Aelred of Hexham



Aelred was the son of a priest. He was born at Hexham in 1109 and entered the Cistercian Order at Rievaulx in about 1133, after spending some years in the court of King David of Scotland. He became Abbot of Revesby in 1143 and returned to Rievaulx four years later to become abbot and to spend the remainder of his life. That's why he sometimes styled, 'Aelred of Rievaulx'.

Aelred was profoundly influential through his spiritual writings, which he began at the request of Bernard of Clairvaux, the two having a similar approach to the spiritual life. Because of this, Aelred was often called the 'Bernard of the North.' He died on this day at Rievaulx in 1167.

Sermon © the Revd Denise Owen.

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The liturgy assumes this service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 Brother, sister, let me serve you ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ calls us to share the heavenly banquet of his love with all the saints in earth and heaven. Therefore, knowing our unworthiness and sin, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for Aelred of Hexham

Almighty God,
who endowed Aelred the abbot
with the gift of Christian friendship
and the wisdom to lead others in the way of holiness:
grant to your people that same spirit of mutual affection,
so that, in loving one another,
we may know the love of Christ
and rejoice in the eternal possession
of your supreme goodness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus

Whoever fears the Lord will do this, and whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom. She will come to meet him like a mother, and like a young bride she will welcome him. She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of wisdom to drink. He will lean on her and not fall, and he will rely on her and not be put to shame. She will exalt him above his neighbours, and will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly. He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing, and will inherit an everlasting name. *Ecclesiasticus 15:1-6*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. *Philippians 3:7-14*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Such love, pure as the whitest snow](#)

[\(click on this link\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

All Glory to you O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

'Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessèd are those servants whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them.' *Luke 12:32-37*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

I'm writing this reflection after New Year's Day and before Epiphany, so during the twelve days of Christmas. Traditionally Christmas decorations remain up until Epiphany, but I've already cleared my living room of the Christmas cards I received, the Christmas ornaments I had on display, and even the huge number of tealight holders I love to use at Christmas, only the Nativity scene remains in my front window with the star hanging above. The vicarage looks quite bare, and if I'm honest, a bit sadder than it did this time yesterday.

Why do I mention this bit of Christmastide trivia? Well, as I was reading and contemplating the readings appointed for Aelred, I was particularly struck by the emphasis on 'possessions', and our response or even relationship with or to them. I do feel that the living room here seems to be denuded of candles, despite the many other ornaments and books I have around me, and the fact that in the Church it's still Christmas! In the gospel Jesus exhorts his followers to sell their possessions and give alms. This is incredibly challenging now, and of course was then, and I wonder if I heard Jesus saying that to me how seriously I'd take it, not because I don't want to follow Jesus, but because I don't want to sell my stuff even for the poor.

Very, very few I imagine, do sell their possessions in the way Jesus seems to suggest, but of course Aelred as a member of a religious community would have done something just as radical. He would have pooled his own material resources with those of the community as a whole in order to support the community and its mission. Indeed, members of religious communities continue to do this today.

The readings prompt me to contrast my attachment to what I own, and my attachment to Christ. Are we able to say with St Paul that we regard 'everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ'? I don't think this is a figure of speech for Paul. I think his love of Christ was so profound that for him these words are profoundly true, and he wants his readers to find them profoundly true as well. Paul's readers were living in very precarious circumstances where persecution and even death were real possibilities; the temptation to conform to the world and remain safe, rather than follow Christ and be in danger would have been huge. Although, thankfully, not living in such dangerous times, the temptation for us to conform to worldly expectations of material comfort is more subtle and insidious. As I've said, I'm writing after Christmas and a member of the congregation here has already donated quite a lot of their unwanted or unneeded presents to the church. I'm sure the family enjoyed opening them and were grateful for receiving them, but on reflection realised that they could be put to better use by the

Foodbank or woman's refuge. This of course, is in response to having more than enough of the things they were given, not the everything Jesus and St Paul mention.

In turn this prompts the question, if Jesus asks us to sell our possessions and give to the poor, and Paul writes that everything is loss compared to the surpassing value of Christ, how do I balance my attachment, (I won't say love) of what I own, to the love I have for Christ? What would I be prepared to lose in order to remain in a right relationship with him? A few clothes I don't need? My car? Everything? These questions are impossible to answer, but I think, are worth contemplating, because in the New Testament there is teaching which encourages to be suspicious of our reliance on what we own and have, in comparison to how we build our lives on God and God's care.

I seem to have meandered a long way from Aelred of Hexham and his life. As a monk, even though he may not have had many possessions he could call his own, he was part of a stable community who knew where their next meal was coming from, and had quite a grand monastery to live in. And yet, he no doubt also contemplated the teaching of Christ and the letters of Paul and wondered where he fitted in, and how much deeper God was asking him to go. This seems to me to be the daily task of the Christian, to read God's word and know it to be speaking to us about ourselves and our lives. It is our response to what we read and hear that is important and demonstrates our willingness to accept the 'surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord.' Amen

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

We believe and trust in one God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

What is love, O my God?

It is, if I am not mistaken, this ineffable delight of the soul,
the more sweet as it is more pure, the more gratifying as it is more ardent.

The one who loves You possesses You in proportion to their love
because You are Love.

Love is the torrent of joy with which you inebriate Your elect,
transforming them into Yourself by Love for You.

Charity may be a very short word, but with its tremendous meaning of pure love,
it sums up man's entire relation to God and to his neighbour.

The reward of friendship is itself. The man who hopes for anything else does not
understand what true friendship is.

Friendship is that virtue by which spirits are bound by ties of love and sweetness
and out of many are made one.

From the time when I began to recognise the sweetness of the holy scriptures and
the honey-sweet name of Christ claimed my affection for itself, whatever lacked
the salt of heavenly literature and the seasoning of that most pleasant name could
not be tasty or attractive to me, no matter how cleverly argued what I read or
heard seemed to me.

No medicine is more valuable, none more efficacious, none better suited to the
cure of all our temporal ills than a friend to whom we may turn for consolation in
time of trouble, and with whom we may share our happiness in time of joy.

These quotes and prayers are from Aelred of Hexham

Merciful Father,

All accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver
The peace of the Lord be always with you,
All And also with you.

HYMN 3 What a friend we have in Jesus [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
All Amen.

HYMN 4 When I needed a neighbour [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
All In the name of Christ. Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
And now we give thanks, most gracious God,
surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses
and glorified in the assembly of your saints.
The glorious company of apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
We, your holy Church, acclaim you.
In communion with angels and archangels,
and with all who served you on earth and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Aelred and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Aelred
that he served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.